



The Old Ironsides Report



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354th Civil Affairs Brigade encourages young entrepreneurs in Baghdad

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372nd MPAD

BAGHDAD, Iraq - A business meeting focused on creating business opportunities and entrepreneurship for young businessmen and women in Iraq was held at the Iraqi Forum in Baghdad Sept. 20.

Spc. Varetta Barnes, a civil affairs specialist with the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, an Army Reserve unit from Riverdale, Md., hosted the meeting of the Entrepreneur Business Professionals of Iraq, in which more than 200 business professionals between the ages of 21 and 35 heard lectures on topics related to entrepreneurship.

The 354th Civil Affairs Brigade is part of Task Force 1st Armored Division for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Guest speakers from Kellogg, Brown and Root, Bechtel, the Ministry of Housing and Construction, and the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade spoke about topics such as obtaining contracts from companies and investing in the stock market.

The speakers also fielded questions from the audience on these subjects.

"Everyone had questions," Barnes said. "We had everyone fill out a comment form and leave any outstanding questions or issues on them."

Once the comment forms are translated, Barnes will have a better perspective on what's on the mind of the majority of the entrepreneurs who attended the conference.

"I'm going to find what organization the people wanted to speak to most, and make that organization the focus of the next meeting," she said.

The meeting also provided an important opportunity to a group of people who had been overlooked in the past, Barnes said.

Barnes' team from the 354th, the economy and commerce team, operates the Baghdad Business Center at the Iraqi Forum (convention center).



Spc. Varetta Barnes, civil affairs specialist, 354th Civil Affairs Brigade, an Army Reserve unit from Riverdale, Md., and an interpreter address an audience of young business professionals at the Iraqi Forum (the convention center) in Baghdad.

The business center helps Iraqi professionals to network and to find business opportunities in Baghdad.

However, most of the people who come into the business center are men over the age of 40, she said. "I knew there had to be younger entrepreneurs out there," Barnes said. "If they don't already own their own business, perhaps they want to." The professionals who attended the meeting represented several industries, including construction, trade, technology, telecommunications and transportation.

By helping these businessmen and women, the civil affairs soldiers are helping them to stimulate the Iraqi economy, Barnes said.

"Getting these businesses up and running will create economic development," she said. "We'll get money flowing through Baghdad, and the city will grow."

Once larger companies begin to pour money into businesses here, inflation will go down, and Baghdad will be able to stand on its own feet again, she said.

Between the business center and the meetings, said Barnes, a Boston native, she feels that she has a hand in the reconstruction of Iraq.

"We are a part of history," she said. "We're helping to rebuild Baghdad. To be part of that is a great feeling."

(Left) Young Iraqi business professionals attend a conference focused on entrepreneurship at the Iraqi Forum (the convention center) in Baghdad.



NEWS

Justice Probes Leak of CIA Agent's Name

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Justice Department launched a full-blown criminal investigation into who leaked the name of a CIA officer, and President Bush directed his White House staff on Tuesday to cooperate fully. The White House staff was notified of the investigation by e-mail after the Justice Department decided late Monday to move from a preliminary investigation into a full probe. It is rare that the department decides to conduct a full investigation of the alleged leak of classified information.

Guantanamo Worker Held in Security Probe

WASHINGTON (AP) - A civilian translator at the U.S. prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, was arrested at a Boston airport after authorities found classified information in his possession, officials said Tuesday. The arrest was the third involving someone who worked closely with the largely Muslim, non-English-speaking population of about 660 suspected al-Qaida and Taliban fighters being held at the Guantanamo Bay camp. Two military personnel are also in custody.

Report: Pope's Health 'In a Bad Way'

VATICAN CITY (AP) - Ailing Pope John Paul II is "in a bad way," one of his closest advisers said in an interview published Tuesday, calling on the faithful to pray for him. An aide to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, however, told The Associated Press that the comments in no way indicated John Paul's health had worsened in recent days. Instead, they reflected concern about John Paul's frailty, the aide said.

Number of Uninsured Up 2 Years in a Row

WASHINGTON (AP) - The ranks of the uninsured swelled by 2.4 million last year as insurance costs kept rising and more Americans lost their jobs and health care coverage. The number of people without health insurance the entire year rose to 43.6 million, a jump of almost 6 percent from 2001 and the second consecutive annual increase, the Census Bureau said in a report being released Tuesday. The percentage of Americans without health coverage rose from 14.6 to 15.2.

Chaplain's Thought for the Day:

Uniqueness

Education should be the process of helping everyone to discover his uniqueness.

--Leo Buscaglia

We are each special, which means there is not another person just like ourselves. Nobody looks just like us. Nobody's voice sounds quite like our own. And nobody thinks through a story just like we do.

Each of us has been created for a special purpose. Maybe it's for what we'll teach a friend, or the way we'll help a sister or a brother. Every day will give us chances to offer our special talents to others. God has a way of using each of our varied talents to help another.

LEISURE & TRAVEL...

Airlines offer discount tickets for R&R flyers

WASHINGTON(American Forces Press Service) - Service members returning home from Southwest Asia for rest and recuperation leave can now get discount fares for connecting flights after they arrive at the Baltimore-Washington International Airport.

The R&R program, which began Sept. 25, provides free flights to Baltimore or to Frankfurt, Germany. Service members must pay for all transportation beyond those gateways.

The discount airline ticket program is designed to reduce the troops' out-of-pocket costs, airline officials said, particularly because most must buy their plane tickets at the last minute, when airlines generally charge higher prices. During the first week of the R&R program, service members received just two to three days notice of their leave, although more notice is expected now that the program is under way.

So far, Delta, American, Southwest and Northwest Airlines are offering discount tickets to eligible troops, and more airlines are expected to extend the offer.

To qualify for discounted tickets, service members must book their follow-on flights before leaving Kuwait City International Airport, the outbound gateway airport for the R&R program, explained Monnie Riggan, director of operations and support services for Navigant-SATO Travel.

The Army contracted with SATO Travel to set up a ticketing operation on the edge of the Kuwait airport. Located at Camp Champion, a tent city that serves as the marshalling point for soldiers leaving on R&R leave, the facility is staffed with ticketing agents to help outbound troops.

So far, 80 to 90 percent of the troops require tickets for connecting flights, Riggan said. She expects that percentage to decrease if the military moves forward with plans to add additional U.S. gateways for R&R flights.

Meanwhile, Riggan cautioned troops not to buy their tickets for connecting flights online. In the event that their flight from Kuwait or Frankfurt is delayed, these service members could miss their connecting flights, she said, and have no way to get reimbursed for the price of their tickets.

"Buying tickets online is just too risky for this type of travel," she said. "If there's a delay, the ticket is of no value, and there is nothing we can do to help."

One R&R flight, for example, was scheduled to arrive at BWI airport before noon, but it actually arrived closer to 6 p.m.

Some service members missed their connecting flights and were stuck with worthless tickets.

Riggan said her office is working with one airline to extend partial rebates to some of the first returning R&R troops who purchased top-dollar airline tickets before the ticket discounts were introduced. She was uncertain if other airlines would make the same offer.

The R&R program is proceeding well with 270 Operation Iraqi Freedom troops leaving the theater every day for 15 days of R&R leave. The daily flights stop at Frankfurt, but most of the passengers continue on to BWI Airport.

Safety Tip of the day...

Acting safely is...

- **An attitude, not a checklist**
- **A 24 hour-a-day job**
- **Everyone's responsibility**
- **Protecting our resources**